IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claim 1 and add new claim 10 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A surface treatment method for removing a passive film on a surface of a metal material prior to heating with a temperature-maintaining process, said surface treatment method comprising:

raising the temperature of said metal material, which has not been subjected to a passive film removing treatment, to a temperature at which the surface treatment is performed in a place in which amino resin is present, and during the raising of the temperature, removing the passive film by C, N and H which are liberated from the amino resin.

- 2. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material prior to heating said metal material.
- 3. (Original) The surface treatment method according to claim 2, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material by a solvent.
- 4. (Withdrawn) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is not applied to said surface of said metal material and wherein said

amino resin is placed in a heat treatment furnace together with said metal material to heat said metal material.

- 5. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein melamine resin, urea resin, aniline resin, or formalin resin is used as said amino resin.
- 6. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said surface of said metal material is modified by forming a hardened layer or a compound layer on said surface of said metal material subsequently to removing the passive film.
 - 7. (Cancelled)
- 8. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 6, wherein

nitriding or carburizing is performed.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (New) The surface treatment method according to claim 8, wherein performing a nitriding treatment, which comprises a combination of ammonia gas and an endothermic gas (RX gas), or a carburizing treatment after the removing of the passive film,

wherein the performing of the nitriding treatment comprises applying the combination of the ammonia gas and the RX gas at a first predetermined temperature for a first predetermined period of time, and

the performing of the carburizing treatment comprises applying a carburizing gas at a second predetermined temperature for a second predetermined period of time.